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BASEL CONVENTION

Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal
Eleventh meeting
Geneva, 3–6 September 2018
Item 3 (b) (iv) of the provisional agenda•

Matters related to the work programme of the Open-ended Working Group for 2018–2019: scientific and technical matters: marine plastic litter and microplastics

Marine plastic litter and microplastics

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. At its thirteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal included activities related to marine plastic litter and microplastics in the work programme of the Open-ended Working Group for the biennium 2018–2019 set out in the annex to decision BC-13/17. The activities, subject to the availability of resources, were as follows:

(a) To consider relevant options available under the Convention to further address marine plastic litter and microplastics, taking into account, inter alia, the assessment requested by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme in its resolution 2/11, any relevant resolution adopted by the Environment Assembly at its third session and existing guidance documents and activities under the Basel Convention that addressed issues related to marine plastic litter and microplastics;

(b) To develop a proposal for possible further action, within the scope of the Convention and avoiding duplication with activities relating to the matter in other forums, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting.

2. The Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention and the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, in their decisions BC-13/11 and SC-8/15 respectively, encouraged interested regional and coordinating centres to work, under the Convention, on the impact of plastic waste, marine plastic litter, microplastics and measures for prevention and environmentally sound management.

3. By its resolution 3/7, on marine litter and microplastics, the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session invited relevant international and regional organizations and conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Basel Convention, the Stockholm Convention, the International Maritime Organization and its conventions, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, the regional seas conventions and programmes, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the

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Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as appropriate within their mandates, to increase their action to prevent and reduce marine litter and microplastics and their harmful effects and to coordinate where appropriate to achieve that end.

4. In paragraph 10 of the same resolution, the Assembly decided to convene, subject to the availability of resources, meetings of an open-ended ad hoc expert group to further examine the barriers to and options for combating marine plastic litter and microplastics from all sources, especially land-based sources. The first meeting of the group will be held in Nairobi from 29 to 31 May 2018, and the second meeting is planned for November 2018.

II. Implementation

5. Following the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat initiated activities related to marine plastic litter and microplastics. The Secretariat compiled information on initiatives related to marine plastic litter and microplastics relevant to the Basel Convention and made it available on the website of the Convention,[1] and continues to participate in the activities of the global partnership on marine litter of the United Nations Environment Programme, including in its webinars.

6. In accordance with the activities specified in the work programme of the Open-ended Working Group for the biennium 2018–2019, the Secretariat, thanks to generous financial support provided by the Government of Norway, prepared a report on possible options available under the Convention to further address marine plastic litter and microplastics for consideration by the Open-ended Working Group at its eleventh meeting. The full report is set out in document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.11/INF/22 and possible further action on marine plastic litter and microplastics that the Open-ended Working Group may wish to consider as a proposal for submission to the Conference of the Parties is set out in the annex to the present note.

7. In addition, information on activities related to marine plastic litter and microplastics undertaken by regional and coordinating centres has been compiled in document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.11/INF/22/Add.1.

8. On 4 April 2018, the Secretariat received an invitation from the United Nations Environment Programme to attend and submit a paper for the first meeting of the open-ended ad hoc expert group on marine litter and microplastics, to be held in Nairobi from 29 to 31 May 2018. The Secretariat submitted a paper informing of the progress on relevant activities undertaken as at 16 April 2018.[2] A link to the outcome of the meeting will be made available in document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.11/INF/23.

III. Proposed action

9. The Open-ended Working Group may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Open-ended Working Group

1. *Welcomes* the report on possible options available under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal to further address marine plastic litter and microplastics[3] and takes note of the information on activities related to marine plastic litter and microplastics undertaken by regional and coordinating centres;[4]

2. *Decides* to transmit the proposal for possible further action on marine plastic litter and microplastics set out in the annex to the present decision for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to communicate the present decision to the open-ended ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 10 of resolution 3/7 of the United Nations Environment Assembly and to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session.

[1] http://www.basel.int/tabid/6068/Default.aspx.

[2] https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/access-position-papers.

[3] UNEP/CHW/OEWG.11/INF/22.

[4] UNEP/CHW/OEWG.11/INF/22/Add.1.

Annex to decision OEWG-11/[...]

[to be inserted]

Annex

Possible further action on marine plastic litter and microplastics

The Conference of the Parties may wish to take into account any resolution related to marine plastic litter and microplastics adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session, to be held in Nairobi from 11 to 15 March 2019.

For each of the subject areas listed below, the Conference of the Parties may wish:

1. **General**

To reconfirm that marine plastic litter and microplastics are an issue of serious global concern; to emphasize that the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal can and will play a central and significant role in addressing this problem;

2. **Preventing and minimizing the generation of plastic wastes**

To emphasize the need to adopt a lifecycle approach, and the importance of the waste management hierarchy; to invite Governments, industry and consumers to make efforts to prevent and minimize the generation of plastic waste; to welcome the many initiatives that have been taken; to encourage further efforts;

3. **Removing hazardous constituents from plastic wastes**

To note that plastics may contain potentially hazardous substances; to welcome the work of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants to eliminate or control persistent organic pollutants; to invite Parties to that Convention and other stakeholders to address substances that may pose a risk through their presence in marine plastic litter and microplastics; to welcome the work of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; to encourage particular attention to substances that might pose a risk through their presence in marine plastic litter and microplastics;

4. **Scope of the Basel Convention - definition of wastes covered**

To consider whether any additional constituents or characteristics should be added to Annex I or Annex III respectively to the Convention, and how this work might be undertaken; to consider whether any new categories of waste should be listed in Annex II of the Convention and how this work might be undertaken;

5. **Technical and policy guidance**

To consider whether the framework and practical guidance on prevention and minimization of hazardous and other waste and on environmentally sound management, as well as the technical guidelines adopted in 2002 on the sound management of plastic wastes, deal sufficiently with the challenge of marine plastic litter and microplastics reflecting current technical and other considerations; to consider the case for extending the guidance as necessary; to consider how such work should be undertaken; to consider establishing a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the technical guidelines on plastic wastes;

6. **Partnership approaches**

To consider requesting the working group of the partnership on household waste to consider plastic waste specifically within its work programme; or to consider whether there would be value in establishing a specific new partnership to address plastic wastes and microplastics;

7. **Capacity-building, regional centres and the clearing house mechanism**

To note that the technical assistance plan for the implementation of the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention provides opportunities for capacity-building by Parties; to welcome the extensive work that the regional centres of the Basel and Stockholm conventions have already done; to invite the regional centres and request the Secretariat to continue their activities; to request that the clearing house mechanism gather information about regional and national initiatives including on marine plastic litter and microplastics and make this readily available;

8. **Financial support**

To welcome the voluntary contribution by Governments and the support that the Global Environment Facility and the Special Programme have provided; to encourage them, according to their

mandates and the priorities that have been established, to continue to support in particular projects that will help to address the problem of marine plastic litter and microplastics; to encourage further voluntary contributions to support work on those issues;

9. Cooperation with other international organizations and initiatives

To welcome the engagement of the Secretariat with other international organizations; to encourage the Secretariat to continue to work closely with such organizations;

10. Public awareness and education

To consider how the Convention can most effectively make information available by building on existing work and taking into account the work of the United Nations Environment Programme and other agencies in order to achieve maximum impact and to avoid duplication;

11. Reporting

To consider whether better data could be gathered about the generation, disposal and transboundary movement of plastic wastes in different waste streams, as well as about national policies and progress towards the environmentally sound management of plastic wastes; to consider developing voluntary indicators, targets, timelines and reporting mechanisms on reductions in plastic waste generation, so as to enable the monitoring of progress towards plastic waste minimization at the national and global levels; to consider whether practical guidance on the development of inventories for plastic waste streams for enhancing national reporting could be developed;[1]

12. Action within the Secretariat

To request the Executive Secretary to endeavour to reduce the use of plastics, particularly plastics for single use, within the Secretariat and during meetings organized under the Convention where alternatives exist;

13. Coordination with the United Nations Environment Assembly intersessional process on marine litter and microplastics

(Addressed in paragraph 3 of the draft decision set out in paragraph 9 of document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.11/7)

[1] See also document UNEP/CHW/OEWG.11/5.